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**Arguing against the universality of
Liberal-Democracy: The case of
Singapore**

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Abstract

Presenting an authoritative one-party rule since fifty years, the case of Singapore does not concord with the various theories of democratization. After proving that Singapore is not a Liberal-Democracy, we argue that the country manages to create a model of stability both in terms of politics and economy, that act as trade-offs to liberal characteristics. The approach uses a qualitative analysis of the electoral framework, a cultural comprehension of contemporary elements and data on its economic success. Ultimately, this thesis aims at studying the idea that Liberal-Democracy is not a model that necessarily needs to be implemented for the functioning of all nations.

Keywords

Democratization, Political culture, Political Regime, Authoritarianism, People's Actions Party

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Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague, 17th December 2018

Ploy-Pailine Devillers



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Master Thesis Proposal

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I would like to go along this research work with the guiding thread of: should liberal-democracy be universal? Indeed, the different conflicts emanating from clashes of models seems to call into question the necessity of one unique ideal of State organization. Numerous societies clearly refuse to accept the inevitability of liberal democratic order as “the right one” (Russia, China, Iran, to name a few). Starting with this initial assumption this thesis will attempt to prove that there might exist a plurality of politico-economical models, as an alternative to pushing for unrealistic establishment of liberal democracies all over the world, exporting the Western liberal democratic model everywhere. I will use the example of Singapore in order to prove that it is possible (at least for now) to establish an orderly society that does not comply with liberal democratic standards.

First, I will try to define the concept of liberal-democracy. In the second part, based on the theory of capabilities among others (A.Sen, M.Nussbaum), I’m intended to show that the political arrangement of a Nation will depend on the culture. Since people value different goods in different way depending on their culture and capabilities, the political orientation of their leader will be adapted. Each Nations will do somewhat differently, they will take some abstract concept (freedom for e.g) and will then think about what version of it do they want to endorse according to the history or the traditions. In addition, I will use the idea of Rawls about public political culture and the fact that pluralism is a good unavoidable thing because of the different cultures. Finally I will apply the former sections on the case of Singapore and see if the model is functioning, if yes try to assess why.

Working hypotheses:

- 1) Liberal-democracy is not a rigorous defined concept but we can distinguish liberal democracies with “Family Resemblance” (Wittgenstein).
- 2) Liberal-democracies are trying to impose a normative politico-economical model that is not suitable in every culture.
- 3) The Republic of Singapore is not a liberal-democracy (in the Western sense), however the Singaporean model is successful and standing.

Methodology:

Along my research I'm intended to use mainly two methods: The literature review and the data collection that will be particularly useful in the first part but also in the others. For example, based on the Democracy Index (Economist Intelligence Unit) and other referential such as Freedom House Report, I would like to try to observe and draw the main characteristic of "democratic nations" in order to apply them on the case of Singapore. This first step will be completed by using the method of the "family resemblance" stated by Wittgenstein. I will try to test my hypotheses by collecting supportive arguments and writings from various authors. In my last section I wish to encompass why Singapore - which is not a "failing country"- is functioning and try to explain that civilizational aspect and politico-economical model can conceivably be linked.

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Freedom House Report

Human Rights Watch

World Bank

World Value Survey

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Introduction

During the period preceding the collapse of the Soviet bloc, political scientist divided the world mostly in three categories of political regimes, being democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. The characterisation of nations into the categories such as democracy, authoritarianism or totalitarianism is made depending on the relation between the governors and the governed. In fact this dichotomy between liberal-democracy and authoritarianism is the main ideological debate that exists nowadays. The decolonisation process in 1960s and the fall of the soviet bloc led to the assumption that most nations will gradually and naturally go towards democracy as they show economic development. In contempt of the exportation and promotion of the model in these newly independent countries, conflicts emanating from clashes of models seem to call into question the necessity of one unique State organization. Numerous societies clearly refuse to accept the inevitability of liberal democratic order and some form of authoritarianism still persist.

As well as several other countries, Singapore falls in the bag between the two models, the “hybrid models”. Designed on the Westminster example, Singapore was intended to be a democracy; yet from early independence with Lee Kuan Yew, until nowadays with his son Lee Hsien Loong, the country is led by the same political party. Beyond the circumstances of Singapore and the strong personality of its founding father, there is the complex question of the relationship between economic development and democracy. Associated to each other, democracy favours economic development and vice versa, but the Singaporean case doesn't appear to have chosen this path and call into question certain liberties and political rights related to economic success.

As most detractors of the Singaporean model come from the West because individual rights and liberties outweigh in our societies, it might seem disruptive for them to understand why Singapore's leader have managed to hoist the country to a first class economy, situated in a developing region of the world, while not observing criteria for liberal democracy. While some scholars are impressed by

the development of this Asian City-State and defend its particularity others do not hesitate to call it “Disneyland with the death penalty” (Gibson, 1993).

Consequently, this research paper is designed to call into question the necessity of this one unique model of governance, but it doesn't intend to request a shift from one type of political society to another one, or in any case to hierarchically organize the different types of political regimes. Rather, we explore in a philosophical way the possibilities and suitability of a Polity to a singular nation and, hopes to bring a more progressive and pluralistic view of the functioning of a society. We chose the specific case of Singapore in order to answer the question of whether Liberal-Democracy is a regime that all country should choose, as it seemed to be an interesting object for this analysis. It presents on one hand a functioning economy and what it seems to be, functioning institutions too. However, the country, in light of its history and ethnical composition doesn't appear to possess a Western style of Liberal- Democracy. Also, the geographical position of our case-country, the assertive influence of Confucianism and other Asian values because of its proximity to China or Japan makes it a good subject.

The guiding thread of this thesis is the concept of “liberal-democracy”, with which we argue that albeit not presenting a corresponding *de facto* regime, Singapore's governance is intended for stability and efficiency and thus doesn't necessarily need democracy in this regard for the moment.

The first section presents the conceptual framework used for this purpose. We explain the different hypotheses and the methodology employed followed by a summary of the main findings related to our topic. The second section develops on the different concepts of Democracy. The third section starts with an overall view of the history of Singapore and its main event. It continues with a comparison of the actual political system of the country, to the ideal criteria of Liberal-Democracy. This part intends to find how different and deviant the Singaporean system is in order to make an appreciation of the stability of the

regime and its institutions. In the fourth section, we tackle the economic theories claiming that democracy and wealth go in pair, and wish to provide evidence of a possible authoritarian open-market. Finally, the results of the research and its recommended further steps will be discussed in the last section.

1. Conceptual framework

1.1 Hypotheses

In order to see if the Republic of Singapore as a non liberal-democracy is functioning; understand here if it can provide with a stable authority and a stable economy, this paper proposes the two following hypotheses.

Hypothesis #1: Liberal-Democracy is not necessary to provide for a representative and stable government to Singapore.

Hypothesis #2: Liberal-Democracy is not necessary to provide for a successful and stable economic state to Singapore.

Hypothesis #3: For this particular case, the “Singaporean Model” is as good as the Western model.

The situation that we observed nowadays with Singapore is a country that has known an incredible fast growth of its economy after gaining independence; a competitive economy that is characterized by a high-skilled labour force, a business-friendly environment for most entrepreneurs, and a services and manufacturing specialization in high-value added sectors. Singapore might be more developed than some long-established democracies in the world. This success is coupled with a firm-handed government elected by the citizens but providing a restricted freedom of individual’s rights and actions. The Western sense of democracy would naturally question the democratic nature of this system as Singapore is now lead by the same party (People’s Action Party) since its creation, shadowing with a great majority all other parties at parliamentary elections. In addition, the government seems to have a control over the press, as most entertainment agency is government-owned. We support here the thesis that other factors than the ones characteristic of liberal-democracy are the reason why

and how can the Singaporean model stand and provide a good groundwork for the citizens to thrive.

1.2 Methodology

For the final goal of understanding the stability of the Singaporean political system and more particularly why should the universality of Liberal-Democracy be questioned, this research paper proposes to undertake the political comparative approach by comparing the political machinery of Singapore with normative literature on the functioning of a state. It is an evaluative work hoping to explain the choice of the actual operative of the country.

The collection of theories linking economic success and liberal-democratic character of a political regime will provide us with the basis of our analysis. Indeed, non-Western and non-liberal democratic, our case study is the Republic of Singapore on which we apply a qualitative analysis of its political and economical sphere in order to understand the existence of this alternative model. For this purpose, we will be using various statistical data from primary sources such as official governmental documents, policy and policy papers, to show the political structure and position existing in Singapore. Secondary sources such as academic papers and reports by independent research institutes (*inter alia* Freedom House, Human Right Watch, World Bank) will be used to expose the deviation of the Singaporean regime from the mainstream ideals. Finally, international and local established newspapers will be consulted for the analysis.

In assessing if the government internal stance and policies are positively viewed by the local population, it would have been interesting to have access to opinions surveys, however because of the existing fear of defamation and restrictive freedom of speech it would have been difficult to find such objective data.

1.3 Literature Review

The literature review will overfly the main theories of democratisation, why is liberal democracy considered to be the main goal of our societies, to then consider its limits.

Discussing prospects of further cooperation at the Vienna Summit of 2006 between the United-States and the European Union, the parties have recognized “the advancement of democracy as a strategic priority of our times” (Council of the EU, 2006) and thus officially set political agendas motivated to tend towards democracy. International organizations, such as the United- Nations do consider this particular point as one of their goals and might impose some moral and practical sanctions on countries that do not respond to the specific archetype. A simple look at the lexical field of the United-Nations Human Rights’ main website, publications or charter can confirm this with words such as “responsibility”, “leading role and mandate”, “task” (“OHCHR -What we do”, n.d.) which enhance this character of necessity for liberal-democracy and its components.

More than that, Francis Fukuyama believed liberal democracy was an accomplishment, the purpose of all regimes’ transition (Rosanvallon, 2008) and the “end of History, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution” (Fukuyama, 1989). In his famous essay “The end of history” Francis Fukuyama stated that the Western style of democracy, that is Liberal Democracy has proven to be the end of political developments and that other political system failed in their persistence on the long run. To him, no other viable options existed that can guarantee and protect the recognition of individuals’ freedom through a system of law. The rights to freedom can only exist in an environment where the consent of the governed was given to the governors (Fukuyama, 1989). Finally, he believed that a liberal-democracy is the end of history as it is a final stage where there should not be “any struggle or conflict over “large” issues, what remains is economic activity” (Fukuyama, 1989). He does not specify what he meant by “large issues”

but we could understand it that in the end, policy-making and the polity will concern “the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands” (Fukuyama, 1989).

The debate about political systems and which of them are the most successful and long lasting seemed to be answered after the fall of the iron curtain. A maximum of individual liberty and a free capitalist economy seemed to be the dominant and most survivable basis for a political system. But the rise of populist movements around the globe and an increasing authoritarian occurrence of political leaders like in Turkey or Russia for instance, raises further doubt that liberal western democracies will be in place around the world in the near future. The democratic model is certainly not the ideal type of regime, however it is considered as being the “least bad”. Success of the model in nowadays democratic countries, relies perhaps on the absence of alternatives models and on three experiences: the existence of open-markets with an authoritarian hand, the rise of critics concerning the models showing a gap between the ideal and the reality, and the non-compatibility of Liberal-Democracy by way of discourses on Asian Values among others.

At the turn of the millennium, things began to change with the emergence of more authoritarian regimes, nevertheless more or less democratic, and relatively economically efficient. The emergence of China as a world power, after two decades of dizzying economic growth and an undeniable improvement in the average standard of living of the population (Human Development Index, 2018), forces us to question the effectiveness of its model which is a form of “enlightened dictatorship”. Also, as Fukuyama forecasted as one of the reason for a possible “reverse-wave”, the events in the beginning of the millennial of the Twin Towers attacks and the US intervention in Iraq led to a decrease of public support in democracy caused by the legitimization of violence for security purpose. Additionally, Cerny points out of the decline and erosion of the model based on the competition with non-State actor. He claims globalisation allow for

the establishment of “ad hoc international and transnational institutions” that “compete with the state powers” (Cerny, 1999).

The existence of authoritarian regimes however has a long history. Greek Antiquity or the Roman empire are just two examples of authoritarian times when people were limited in their rights to exercise political liberty. Hannah Arendt distinguishes between power that is either illegitimate or legitimate. Any authoritarian rulership relies on its legitimacy. The crucial point is that in comparison to a dictatorship even an authoritarian government is restricted by a legal framework and depends on the legitimacy of the people. Arendt states that the source of power is always external and spreads into the political sphere. Therefore, even an authoritarian regime needs to respect external developments to legitimize itself. Further authoritarian leadership justifies the limitations of people liberties with the argument that freedom is ensured by the constraints. The notion and definition of liberty however differs from the Western perception and definition of liberty (Arendt, 1956). The fact that different values in different parts of the world might create other political systems based on their own values different from the Western development that is founded on a Christian basis, seemed to be neglected (Pohl, 2002).

China and other East Asian countries for instance are based on different values than Europe. In Europe the basis were Christian values that were through the movement of the Enlightenment in the 18thC translated in political demands and laws. The Age of Enlightenment emancipated politics from the Church and a process of secularization was initiated. The State started to provide social security systems and the attention paid to the individual created the political system we live in nowadays in Europe.

East Asia and China however are deeply rooted in Confucianism. The priority is given to the community in which individual claims have to be subordinated to the good of the entire community. The individual is part of a broader social realm in which it could not survive without the community. This different perspective of the role of the individual in the society justified a limitation of individual rights in

East Asia and China. Personal rights were limited for the sake of the good for the community (Pohl, 2002).

Liberal democracy is characterized by certain criteria. Free elections, the rule of law, property rights, freedom of speech, a system of checks and balances or the freedom to exercise religion for instance (the definition of Liberal-Democracy will be further discussed in the third section). After the Second World War many countries went along the path of democratization around the world. In Asia however, most countries became rather authoritarian than democratic. East Asia developed political systems that could be rather described as “semi-democratic” or “semi-authoritarian”. Despite authoritarian political structures these countries like Malaysia, Thailand or Singapore granted their citizens relatively wide individual rights. Religious, economic or civil rights were extended. Especially economic rights were established under authoritarian rulership in the past decades. What can be called “liberal autocracy” was established and developed in numerous countries in Asia like Singapore or Hong Kong. Their economic success allowed them to limit political rights in a tradeoff for economic progress (Zakaria, 1997).

Important to note is that these regimes differ from the classical notion of dictatorships. The guarantee of individual rights in certain spheres of the society despite limited political influence of the people enables the people to live in an environment of dignity, and to a certain extent autonomy. The tolerance of religious choices and the extension of economic and civil rights are a core characteristic of a dignified life (Zakaria, 1997). This closely follows the argumentation of Arendt outlined above. The discussion about authoritarian regimes is characterized by the difficulty to clearly draw lines. Not every autocracy is a dictatorship. Semi-authoritarian regimes might grant individual rights to its citizens regarding religion or economic liberties. As there are differences among democratic designs in the western world there exist differences among arrangements of authoritarian regimes (Diamond, 2015).

The case of Singapore is an example that political autocracy can go hand in hand with a wide range of individual rights that are respected and granted by the government. The limitation of political rights is justified by the stability of the society. Confucian Values like described above build the foundation for political guidelines that translate into actual policies.

2. On the concept of democracy

2.1 Classic democracy and its variants

In order to understand the appearing contradiction of the Singaporean model with the concept of liberal democracy and justify our use of this particular notion, we need to cover the definitions of a democratic system, the variants of democracy and the differences that dwell between them.

Etymologically, the word democracy comes from the Greek and is the rule (*kratia*) of the people (*demos*). It is purely a form of government that gives power to the people. Aristotle believed that “democracy exists wherever the free-born are sovereign” (Aristotle. & Jowett, 1999) in order to distinguish it ironically from a state of oligarchy where immorally intention persons could have the power, even if it’s the majority, i.e. where the rich could impede the poor of having a voice. Thus ideally the perfect democratic government would be a direct democracy where the people are directly leading the country and choosing the policies for themselves. In present days and common used terms, we would say that a classical democracy is when a government’s power and authority emanate from the choice of the population. If we comment on the quote of President Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg address, that describes democracy as “the government of the people, by the people and for the people” (Haas, n.d.), we could only ask ourselves how is this going to take place. Unfortunately, the size of a state’s territory and its population can prove it difficult in terms of logistics to gather complete approbation, hence when a direct democracy exists in only some ascertainable cases (mentioned later in this section), a representative democracy or otherwise said a majoritarian democracy is more common to be found. Indeed, the Greek philosopher follows and defines it purely in term of political system, it is apply as an adjective for a constitution: “democracy is simply that form of government in which the greater number are sovereign” (Aristotle. & Jowett, 1999).

We have described here a minimal definition of democracy like Joseph Schumpeter. It is a method of political arrangements to arrive at political decisions where citizens decide directly on a matter (Schumpeter, 2006).

The majoritarian system of government is simple and stands as the most possible and applicable style of democracy because the majority's voice come closer to the ideal of direct democracy (Lijphart, 2012). However, from this majoritarian definition, democracy can take different forms in practice, there is a variety of this type of constitution because the people (*demos*) and elected notables vary across societies. In an effort to clarify how to understand a democracy, Michael Haas describes in the appendix of his last book the different types of democracies that have been developed. He identifies more than forty of them coined by numerous authors, among which we can cite (Haas, n.d.):

- “Pure or Direct Democracy”: As explained above, this is the classic model where people vote directly on affairs of the State without intermediaries. Historically this model works in village-societies and city-states such as Athens or local cantons in Switzerland (Cerny, 1999).
- “Consociational Democracy”: A type of democracy coined by Arendt Lijphart in which decisions are reached by consensus rather by a majoritarian vote. He believed this system would work at best in societies divided along religious, ethnic or racial lines because the system allow for a representation of the minorities (Lijphart, 1968).
- “Deliberative Democracy”: deliberations are the product of discussions and debate among the citizens.
- “Guided Democracy”: system known notably in Indonesia with Sukarno who claimed to guide the country in its economic development and towards democracy. These regimes usually erect a very strong-handed government that originally has been elected through elections.
- “Participatory Democracy”: Efforts to make the political leader more accountable for their actions through participatory mechanisms permitting the views and opinions of the citizens to impact greater and have more influence on the decisions (Bherer, Dufour & Montambeault, 2016).

With this brief and general description of democracy we wished to show how trivial this definition could be allowing for a wide range of countries to be considered democratic. Also, the variety of types describes by Haas enhanced this point and concede countries such as North Korea or the Democratic Republic of Congo to use of the word “democratic” in their name whereas ranked at 167/167 and 144/167 respectively by the Democracy Index (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018).

2.2 The specificities of Liberal-Democracy

On the other hand, liberal-democracy is a more stringent idea and is a modern concept in comparison with the one born in Ancient philosophy. The term liberal democracy gives a note of morality and of principles to the basic democratic regime. Where the previous section describes only who is elected and who vote in simple terms, the next paragraph shows that liberal democracies are defined by more specific points related to: how are the leaders elected, how are the voters voting, how and when does the election take place, what are the requirements for the elections to be valid and why etc.

A state of democracy ensures that the processes by which power is acceded to, wielded and alternates allow for free political competition and are the product of open, free and non discriminatory participation by the people, exercised in accordance with the rule of law, in both letter and spirit.

(Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1997) –

Respectively from this definition, it is the form of government where the citizens elect, directly or indirectly, the authority incumbents through free and fair elections, with each individual having an equal consideration. This implies that all citizens are entitled to vote and have an equal weight in the decisions process. Their vote is secret and made without fear, intimidation or any influences. The elections refer to the process and the day of the elections, the latter being held at regular interval (Goodwin-Gill, 2006).

Sociologist Max Weber defines power as one's ability to exercise control over someone's action implicitly or explicitly with or without his or her consent. In that sense, democracy would be considered the most legitimate type of regime because power is given to the incumbents through free and regular elections by the electoral body, it is the best quality of consent. They give purposely the capacity to the government to have the political power and the constraint to organise and apply this dominance.

Going more in depth, liberal democracies embrace the dimensions of justice, freedom (liberty) and equality. In his definition of *polyarchy*, Robert Dahl (Diamond, 2002) stresses that for the conditions to meet the criteria of fairness and freedom, some basic foundations need to be built for the dimensions to be meaningful, such as different freedoms, various sources of information concerning the politics and different institutions regarding the processes of policy-making and elections. Indeed, when all voters can have an equal voice, the elections need to be organized accordingly so that all casted votes can be consequential. All eligible citizens should be able to vote freely and easily, meaning that the access to the polls should not be impeded and has to allow the full range of the electorate to participate.

A liberal democracy allow for anybody who meets the particular constitutional criteria to be able to present itself as a candidate for the elections in question. There should not be any reason for candidate who answers the different prerequisites, steps and rules to be obstructed arbitrarily. Simultaneously, the plurality of parties or candidates for the elections is one important notion in a liberal democracy as it ensures the people to have a significant choice, a variety of political opinions as well as different ways on how to conduct the *polis*.

In a discourse pronounce in 1819 at the Royal Athenaeum of Paris, Benjamin Constant made the distinction between what he called the Liberty of Ancients and that of Moderns, the latter corresponding the closest to our conception of Liberal-Democracy. In addition to the right of influence in the political decision, Constant

mentioned the right to not be subject to arbitrary decisions, the right to express its opinion, right to circulate and right of assembly (Constant & Bennett, 2017). Surely, preceding the balloting date there should enough time for the citizenry to familiarize with each candidate and programs, and have the opportunity to discuss among them about it, which thus ask for the freedom to discuss and gather candidly.

All of this brings us to our main and last point of this paragraph: the need for an institutional framework. As aforementioned, having these elements does not necessarily qualify the system as liberal democratic because there remain the question as who set and ensure the rules and requirements. Genuine fairness needs for electoral institutions to be as separated as possible from the governing body to avoid partiality. Likewise, the institutions should arrange for the public to easily have access to all political programs and clearly understand the modalities of votes. Various definitions stress the importance of the rule of law, meaning that the constitution encloses the limitations of the powers of the elected officials to ensure the continuity of the principles. In this sense, liberal democracy is that form of government where individual, civic and political rights are recognized and safeguarded in the rule of law.

3. Singapore's political formula

3.1 From land to Nation

We could not continue our research about Singapore without a quick point concerning its first stages of history in order to grasp the roots of their actual culture. Understanding the political system of a country means to trace it back to its origins, to its history because the reasons why and how people happened to be on a specific territory, shape their conceptions and incentives in creating their new society. The following paragraph form a comprehensive summary of mainly Mary Turnbull (Turnbull, 2009) and John Miksic's (Miksic, 2014) writings on Singapore's historical background and developments; and will describe very shortly the main events that are relevant for our research.

This small South-East Asian island used to be inhabited and most of the time until then under the Malay influence and its Tamasek Kingdom. In 1819, a British group of expeditors, sent by the British East Indian Company (BEIC) arrived on the island, with Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles as their leader. Finding out quickly about the strategic position of the island on the road to China, the British made a treaty with the Sultan of Singapura (Singapore being the Anglicisation of the Malay name) that allowed the rights to a trading post in the hands of the BEIC on the island. As a man of ambition and ideas, Raffles decided to create Singapore as a new model of experiment, as a trading heaven and imposed absolutely no taxes for merchants deciding to trade there.

Rapidly, Singapore became an important and very attractive harbour for traders of the region and saw its population growing as groups coming from China, India or Indonesia came along, while Malaya served as an agricultural zone and place for gathering trade products from around the region. Many immigrants saw the city-harbour as a place for free-trade and took this opportunity to move there with the

ambition of growing their fortune, making multi-ethnicity a trait of the ethos of the city.

By the beginning of the 20th Century, Singapore was already a lively, cosmopolitan and orderly efficient city but the modern city-State of Singapore is the work of Lee Kuan Yew from the year 1959, when he took the control and led Singapore to its independence out of the British Colonial Empire. The journey to independence was caused by nationalism due to crisis and a great deal of luck because of other Asian political affairs. The revolution of 1911 in China by Sun Yat-Sen marked the beginning of Modern China as a potential powerful country. The idea of nationalism in Asia started and the news had reach Singapore and specifically its Chinatown. The victory in China sounded well in the mind of the poorest class of Singapore. Later, in 1942, after being in Malaya, the Japanese crossed the straits and invaded Singapore where British, Malay, Chinese and Indian were united to fight but it was the fall of Singapore.

Control was brought back British in 1945 after the capitulation of Japan following the atomic bombardments, leaving Singapore in an impoverished situation and tensed community links (Bellows, 2009). This post-war period knew an intensification of the Chinese community sentiment of nationalism after the war because a lot of Chinese blood has been lost on the Singaporean ground. They considered it as a good reason to claim independence. In the same time, British were economically weak and tired of imperial duties and had others plans for the region. Malaya was to be declared independent but not Singapore as it might be useful in foreseeable future. Mao Zedong revolution then came to agitate the communist groups in the peninsula.

British governor thus organized mass elections that opened up opportunities for those working within the British system. Harry Lee was determined to do politics and wanted to create a new party for which he would have need support from the labour unions and the Chinese majoritarian community; it is an important detail as the population allegiance was mainly to them, people were based on trade. Harry

adopted his Chinese name in Public, Lee Kuan Yew and created in 1954 the People's Action Party (PAP) which brought together English educated people and Chinese militants with the common goal of achieving self-government and eventual political independence.

Lee Kuan Yew was not the crowd puller at that time but won later the elections of Prime Minister in June 1959. The population was tired of its dependency on the British Empire that created tensions in addition to the conflict existing at that time between communists and capitalists. The merger of Singapore and Malaya together was in the leader's mind the only way to gain independence from the British, it would bring stability to this small island and continue the economic development that led to people's welfare. The incorporation of Singapore with Malaya, making it one of the 14 states, was made in 1963 and the country changes its name for "Malaysia". This episode didn't last long as racial fights started in Malaysia between Malay and Singaporean and both decided to separate. Singaporean were themselves not ready for a full independence for the reason that they were scared of the size of the peninsula. It was an economic disaster in the beginning, the economy were intertwined to Malaya with the industrial commodities produced on Malayan ground but with good fortune again, China's revolutions at the time scared Western investors who preferred to settle in Singapore.

From this time, until the economic prosperity that we know nowadays in Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew wanted to promote the creation of Singaporean companies (government owned) that could compete against the multinationals. Not just a trade heaven but also a place to live, a home, while keeping the British spirit and legacy of the trade hub.

For this research paper we decided to focus on a determined period of time, from the moment Singapore was only Singapore, i.e. from its second independence and separation from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965, until as far as data allow us to research.

3.2 Classifying Singapore

The following part is designed to help us having a set of variables of liberal democracy in order to compare it to the Singaporean model and determine the degree of differences that our case study has with the ideal vision of a Liberal Democracy.

On the right to vote

Modelled after the British Westminster model, Singapore's political system is described as a parliamentary democratic republic with two main types of elections: The Presidential Elections and The General Elections, otherwise said, the Legislative Elections. Except for cases where a person has been convicted for a criminal act or his clinically not fitted mentally, the Constitution of Singapore does ensure the right to vote to all citizens.

As the head of state, the president represents all the Singaporeans and ensures good relations at the international level. The electorate elects this position after the Presidential Elections Committee approves of the nomination of the candidates (Singapore Const. art 17A, §1.). If only one candidate responds to the criteria, he will be nominated president by the leaving president.

The parliament is a one-chamber institution where 3 types of members can be found: fully-elected members of parliament (MPs), non-constituency members (NCMPs) and nominated members (NMPs) (Singapore Const. art 63, §1.). Elected by the people, the MPs are the candidates receiving the highest number of votes in their respective electoral district. In 1984, the Constitution and Parliamentary Elections Act (PEA) (Parliamentary Elections Act, Chapter 21, 39§1, 2017) introduced the possibility for the "best losers" (Morgan, 2015) to be part of the legislature, they are part of the biggest opposition party and allow some checks and balances within the parliament. "At each general election, the available number of NCMP seats is calculated by subtracting the number of popularly elected Opposition Members from nine (being the maximum number of

NCMPs allowed)” (Morgan, 2015). Finally, NMPs are independent members selected by the President in the basis of honour or distinguishable character. Their term is fixed to two and a half year. The government will be formed by the party present in majority who will appoint a Prime minister and cabinet members from the MPs.

On the right to run for office

The article 44 clause 1) and 2) of the constitution describes qualification for any person to run for legislative office, i.e. as a member of parliament. These qualifications are quite general as they could be found in any other constitutions and seems to be easily checked: an individual can pretend for a parliamentary candidacy when meeting criteria such as detaining Singaporean citizenship, criteria of minimum age of 21, being registered as a voter, residing on the national territory for a minimum of 10 years or to read and speak one of the officials languages (English, Tamil, Malay or Mandarin).

On the other hand, the article 19 clause 2) of the constitution that provides the necessary qualifications to run for presidential office, presents more details and clauses refers to one another intricately. Basically, in addition to the Singaporean citizenship, a minimum age of 45 years old and the non party-membership, the articles stipulates that the person has to satisfy the qualifications specified in the article 44(2) c) and d) mentioned above and meet the public sector requirements or private sector requirements. The public and private sector requirements are requirements proving of the necessary experience and ability for Presidential duties. Practically, to satisfy the public requirements, a person need to have hold office at a high public administrative position for a minimum of three years, for example as a Minister, Chairman of the Public Service Commission, Accountant General or Speaker. In parallel, a position as chief executive of a key statutory boards and government companies need to be hold also during a minimum of three years (Temasek Holdings Limited, Housing and Development Board...). When it comes to private sector requirement, the individual need an experience of

minimum three years as the chief executive in a company that made profit all along his period and didn't fall under insolvency afterwards.

While the qualifications might seem necessary in order to ensure the best candidates for an important position, the conditions are so narrowly drawn that only a handful of person could technically make the cut (Paddock, 2018). A situation that happened with the actual president Halimah Yacob elected president a fortiori in absence of any other eligible candidates and thus questioning the voters' rights.

The question of whether Singapore is liberal-democratic or not is contingent on a diversity of features of its system and it is desirable for us to look for further defining conditions or domain of application (List & Valentini, 2016): how decisions are reached, who participates in the deliberations, how the shareholders contribute to the inputs, how are the decisions carried out etc. Undoubtedly, we can't limit ourselves to only look at formal, constitutional features such as the classical definition of democracy or answer binary questions as "do freedom exists in the City-State"? When in fact it would be more accurate to pay attention to actual political practices, those practices being unique for each state system. While Singaporean Constitution guarantees the right to vote and the right to run for office, the existence of elections does not prove of a democratic application and functioning of these last. Indeed following our definition of liberal-democracy, the Republic of Singapore presents some characteristics that would not be attributed as fair in the Western mentality and in fact some would say, could be pertained to authoritarianism.

3.2.1 Crossing the line of “undemocracy”

In an effort to investigate the elections quality around the world, of their fairness and freeness, Bishop and Hoeffler created a set of variables to judge of these conditions and then argue that their study prove of a rising amount of electoral malpractice (Bishop & Hoeffler, 2016). These variables at the number of ten will help us on the structure of this following part, because in looking if the Singaporean electoral inner workings are free and fair, we can then assume of the liberal democratic character of the country.

The authors made an interesting work in drawing the definition of each variable and the conditions on which we can answer of the free and fair nature, along with making available the codebook and database of their research. Mentioned in the third section, Larry Diamond’s typology of democracies is articulated into six different types, from “liberal democracies” to “politically closed authoritarian regimes” and revealed Singapore as an “hegemonic electoral authoritarian” regime based among others on the presence of opposition in parliament, freeness and fairness (Diamond, 2002). If this classification into a “hybrid regime” is tempting, we need for the purpose of this research to be stricter and avoid the multiple categorization of our case.

Published in the same issue of *Journal of Democracy*, Andreas Schedler’s method of classification is less inclusive because he uses a list of items that can only be significant all together (Appendix 1). Using the analogy of a chain where only one defective loop out of hundreds can cancel the purpose of the chain in itself, the author proposes seven conditions to categorize a country as democratic (Schedler, 2002). However, because the elements of Bishop and Hoeffler do not give us enough details on Singapore’s case, we are here going to answer with more information to the variables that received the coding “0” (meaning that the variable was considered as not *free and fair*) and the ones we thought to extend, in addition to using several links of Schedler relevant for this dissertation.

Electoral management bodies (EMB)

The administrative body responsible for the organization and process of the different types of elections is the Elections Department of Singapore (EDP). Created in 1947 at a time when the Lion-City was still under British rule, it is nowadays under the Prime Minister's Office (Singapore Elections Department - About Us, 2018). As of August 2017, there are currently 29 electoral constituencies in Singapore that can be classified in two types: Single Member Constituencies (SMC) and Group Representation Constituencies (GRC) ("Singapore Elections Department - Types of Electoral Divisions", 2018).

Presented as an important institutional step (Chua, 2002; Yeo, 2002) for a more representative country, the GRC scheme has been created in 1988 in the intention to allow for more ethnical mix in the Parliament. They are electoral divisions that have a high population and/or high territorial size and present at local elections not only one seat for Members of Parliament rather a list composed of several candidates for the associated seats number. Each list comprises currently 4 to 6 candidates, is a fixed slate and needs to have at least one member originating from a minority group -Malay, Indian or Others (Electoral Boundaries Review Committee, 2015). The number of GRC are not fixed but the Parliamentary Elections Act (PEA, art. 8A §1A) calls for a minimum amount of 8 Single Member Constituencies at all time while the rest can be modified at the discretion of the Prime Minister before each elections according to their accuracy.

An Electoral Boundaries Review Committee (EBRC) is appointed by the Prime Minister to assess if the electoral map is up-to-date and in a negative case has to propose a new arrangement of the latest based on geographical criteria and mainly the number of voters in each district (Yeo, 2002). This report does not need to be approved by the members of Parliament rather simply goes in the hand of the Prime Minister and its cabinet whom give green light for changes to be made.

This simple fact shows that the proposed constituencies do not get a chance to be debated or reviewed by the opposition present in the legislative body and could give an advantage to the ruling party's candidates. Indeed, as the opposition parties often claim, the decoupage of these voting districts may favour and lead to the elections of PAP candidates. If the Singaporean government is accused of gerrymandering -the strategic division of the electoral boundaries aiming at advantaging a party or candidate- the later defend itself and explain the regular reorganization by the need to take into consideration changes in term of population growth or shift so that the Members of Parliament can represent adequately the people (Sim, 2015).

What seem to be problematic for critics? Tan and Grofman argue against the efficiency of the introduction of the GRC scheme which in practise doesn't increase the representation of minorities in the Parliament, but rather encourages the presence of the PAP within the institution (Tan & Grofman, 2016). They first shed a light on the Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP) quota and its implications on the ethnic distribution in the country. Multi-ethnicity is one of the main pillars in Singapore, especially after its expulsion from the Malaysian Federation, it has often been a core component of policy-making and political decisions. The government in 1989 introduced the policy in order to avoid racial segregation or community enclaves and imposed that an ethnic minority share can't be superior to 20 percent on public housing. Because 85 percent of the accommodations in Singapore are dependent on the Housing and Development Board (HDB), the influence of this policy is significant on the demographic map (Chua, 1997).

Logically, the mathematical decoupage of the district will always make the Indian and Malay groups a minority which in turns will not guarantee their influence on electoral results through the GRC arrangement. For more than twenty years the opposition hasn't been able to win any GRC, until the general election of 2011 where the Worker's Party managed to secure the group constituency of Aljunied with a number of five MPs and reiterated the event in 2015 (Singapore Elections Department, 2018). Second, Tan and Grofman argued that the carving of electoral

boundaries is subject to manipulation in favour of the incumbents. In addition to frequently being redrawn, the boundaries have shown SMCs dissolved or merged for more GRCs. Because there is more seats a stake, the last ones are important for the PAP and data demonstrate (Figure 1) strong opposition wards grouped with strong PAP ones (Yeo, 2002).

Figure 1: Average Vote Shares of the PAP and Opposition Parties in All Newly Created Constituencies and Dissolved Constituencies since 1988 to 2015

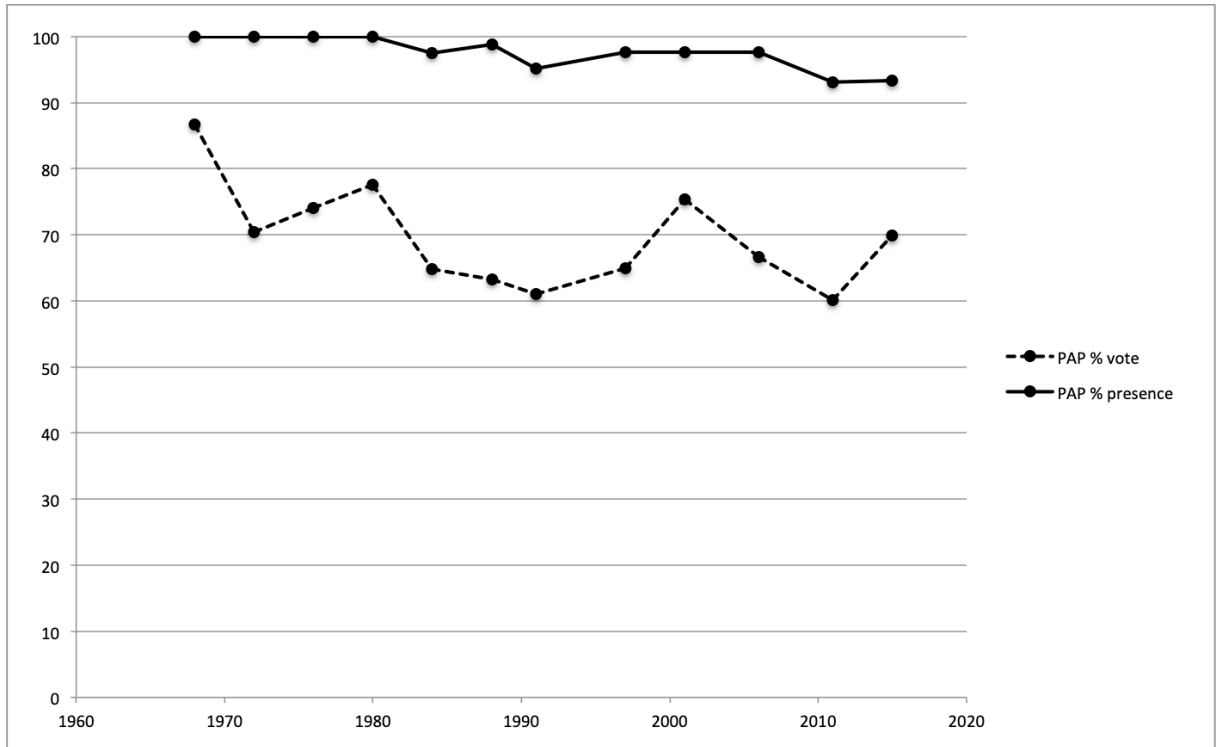
	Dissolved GRCs (%)	Newly Created GRCs (%)	Difference	Dissolved SMCs (%)	Newly Created SMCs (%)	Difference
Average Total PAP Vote Share	62.7	64.6	+1.9	64.9	66	+1.1
Average Total Opp. Vote Share	37.3	35.4	-1.9	34.8	33.4	-1.4

Source: Table 5 in Tan, N., & Grofman, B. (2016). *The Electoral Authoritarian's Subtle Toolkit: Evidence from Singapore*.

We can see the influence that has the fact of voting for a slate of candidates and the asymmetry between the percentage of votes received by the PAP and the percentage of seats it occupied in the house. The People's Action Party is represented in the legislative body for more than five decades since its first accession in office through the General Elections in 1959, followed by an incredible landslide rise on the General Election of 1968, but the chart below shows that the elections results are not completely representative of the influence of opposition parties who basically get votes but no seats with this system, adding to it some walkovers that are not counted in the elections results.

This phenomenon called “disproportionality” refers to the difference degree between votes share and seats share (Figure 2). It is assumed the poor representativeness caused by the “disproportionality sky-rocketed from 22.05 per cent in 1984 to 26.15 per cent in 1988 after the parliament adopted” the GRCs (Croissant, 2002).

Figure 2: PAP's vote and seat percentage in Parliament at General Elections (1968-2015)



Source: Own graph with data retrieved from the official Singapore Elections Department website.

Axis x represents the percentage and axis y the different dates of general elections

Finally, the authors subsequently point out the difficulty of the opposition parties to prepare fairly for battles. Where there's no rule on the period necessary between a report of the EBRC and the publication of a writ of dissolution, a sudden redesign of the boundaries doesn't give enough time for the opposition to plan and find candidates for the new circumscriptions (Tan & Grofman, 2016).

Media access and plurality of opinion

Authoritarian regimes usually have medias that are controlled by the state, by either the existence of a censorship or of a strict interdiction to non-state forms of medias. Some medias can be able to exercise privately, but mostly if their publications serve to praise the regime or to express what the regime wants to achieve. Any form of speech that could go against the interests of the government and the state are lightly tolerated or punished.

In Western World, medias in democracies are supposed to be free from any ideological influences, to be subjective so as to offer access to information and allow the mass audiences to acquire “fair knowledge about available choices” (Schedler, 2002). In a way, independent news are permanent monitors of the government, not necessarily against them, they help in evaluating constantly the policies as well as sharing economic, social or political practices outside the national playfield. To stripe individuals of this possibility or to provide them with biased information would go against this fundamental right.

As a press mode, Singapore’s journalism is following “development journalism”, a model mid-way between the libertarian model and the communist one (Cenite, Shing Yee, Teck Juan, Li Qin & Xian Lin, 2008). Critics claim that development journalism is an instrument for the government to control minds and mainly a tool for propaganda (Salwen & Garrison, 1989). While others advocates of its utility, they believe in a partnership-based relationship of the medias and the government; i.e. by exposing the prevailing problems and suggested solutions of the politicians, development journalism would be helpful in the economic development of the country (Wong, 2004).

The different reasons surrounding censorship and speech limitations are regulated by principally the Sedition Act, the Broadcasting Act for internet and television, and the Newspaper Printing and Presses Act (NPPA). The mass communication landscape in Singapore seems classical with the existence of radio and television

broadcast channels, as well as online and printed newspapers. However, classified quite negatively in the last World Press Freedom Index, Singapore scored 151 out of 180 studied countries (Reporters Without Borders, 2018) and arrived at similar ranks in two other reports (Freedom House, 2018; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018). This could be explained looking at different elements such as at the balance coverage and the objectivity of the publication (Cenite et al., 2008).

To begin with, the government directly and indirectly, has a handy control of news organisations through government owned medias on one side and closely related companies on the other side. Out of the two main local news providers, the company Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) “owns all but one of the local dailies and tabloids, in all the four official languages” (Mauzy & Milne, 2002), while MediaCorp is state-owned. SPH saw itself without equal publisher after a wave of newspapers closed down in the late sixties and seventies. Besides being a listed company with multiple shareholders, the firm’s methods of shares acquisition is framed by the NPPA that ask for the “management shares to have 200 times the voting power of ordinary shares”, and they have to “be endorsed by the government”. Furthermore, the government appoints key supporters at senior positions within SPH (Yeo, 2002).

Even if the government does not dictate directly the editorials of the publications, what is published in Singapore needs to intent to serve the public interest and undesirable content would need to be reviewed. If the government might deny accusation of suppressing freedom of speech (“Grumble and be damned”, 2017), they do not hide it either. In an interview, former editor in chief of SPH Cheong Yip Seng, tells that Lee Kuan Yew himself claimed that he and his government “not the press, would set the agenda for the country. [They] wanted command of the national narrative”. He continued saying that this freedom should be at the service of the national culture and education efforts, and “must be subordinated to the integrity of Singapore and the primacy of purpose of an elected government” (“Press freedom was a fine balancing act with Mr Lee Kuan Yew”, 2015).

After the qualitative nature, another aspect of the medias is the coverage of the publications: the themes they tackle and the actors they focus on. As mentioned earlier, the more the material explains and support the state's views, the better it is. Multinational country, the People's Action Party always made of religion and languages one of their main pillars, and discourses that can exacerbate tensions among the different ethnicities are sanctioned under the so called "Religious Harmony Act", revisited and maintained in 2001 (*Religious Harmony Act 1990*, art. 8, art.9). The framework is designed mainly to contain religious leaders in peace but a recent event showed its extension as the government has banned two foreign Christian missionaries from entering the country (Kelly, 2017). Mainly based on political grounds, it can also be used for societal issues. One important Asian value is family, particularly "traditional family values", a theme that as well doesn't avoid censorship and where foreign entertainment contents are the main target because seen as having more depravity. One recent example concerned the cinematographic adaptation of "Les Miserables", where an homosexual kiss has been cut (The Telegraph, 2016).

Critics or simple mention of doubts related to the authorities could lead to defamation lawsuits. At multiple occasions did the former and current chief of government among others, put individuals or entities under trials accusing them of spreading false information or talking about topics non permissible in public (otherwise said "out of bounds markers"). The Defamation Act does not precise the amount of fine received by the defendant if found guilty, but for most cases it could climb quite high. In few cases, the chase of political opponents behind the curtain of Defamation Act was so intense that it resulted in bankruptcy or the necessity to leave the country (E.g see Jerayetnam, Ngern or Tang Affairs; Mauzy & Milne, 2002).

Despite several claims that the government wants medias to talk about what matters and what is actually happening, it does not give full opportunity for the opposition parties to be under the spotlight. The research of Celite et. Al focuses

on the media coverage and balance during the General Election of 2006 in Singapore. They investigate on the impartiality of the Straits Times newspaper related to the elections using questions about: the amount of articles on the PAP/opposition; percentage of positive-toned articles on PAP/opposition; or amount of front-page focus on PAP/opposition. They uncover that, part of SPH group, The Straits Times offered both a higher percentage of articles focus on the incumbents, and those articles had a tendency to be more eulogistic (Celite et. al., 2002). Their conclusion is nonetheless to a certain degree not binary and gives some possible alternative reasons to the extreme appearance of the PAP in periodical. If the party is more published, they say, it can be simply because of its better qualification or under-qualification of the opposition, or because of its link with the higher decision-makers of The Straits Times who will decide on the editorial. In the end the threat of litigation is so important that journalists practice self-censorship as well as the citizens (Celite et al., 2002).

Concerning the freedoms of Expression and Assembly, here also Singapore stays behind by international standards (Vásquez & Porcnik, 2018). Under the Public Order Act, permission to gather needs to be asked and is usually very overseen. A public assembly requires a permit delivered by the police and failure by the organizer to obtain is usually fined to 5.000 Singaporean Dollars (3.200 euros) (Public Order Act, Art. 16). One tiny area of the island exempted from permits is the Speaker's Corner, situated in the middle of Hong Lim Park. The venue is used for "exhibitions, performances, assemblies and processions" (Human Rights Watch, 2017) and speakers can speak on a variety of topic with prior registration on the National Parks Board website. These strict restrictions are justified by the system for reasons in the "interest of security, public order, or morality" (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Campaign process and ballot access

In his paper on *Hybrid Regimes*, Larry Diamond points out the growing practise of classifying countries as democracies easily because they present elections for the ruling position, between more than one party or candidate (Diamond, 2002). The authors then mentioned the possibility for countries to be competitive and authoritarian. The first notion of an authoritarian regime is the absence of a genuine competition allowing rulers to come from a specific group of the population such as top military authorities or from a group of the population that is favoured like as aristocrats. There is an explicit or implicit control of the possible candidates to the elections, otherwise said, “the recruitment of leaders is a matter of co-optation and not of the electoral competition of candidates for political responsibilities” (Hermet, 1985).

Additionally, the political competition is not maximized and rivalry to the main political party is considered undermining. “The political life exists through devoted relays (parties, unions) while the opposition is tolerated or banned. Elections are a way to appear democratic and aim at legitimising the political system on the international stage and inside, to ensure the apathy of the masses”¹ (Hermet, 1985). If Singapore presents a plurality voting systems, with the existence of officially 36 political parties since 1955 (Data.gov.sg, 2016), running for a political seat is not without obstacles. Parties of the opposition often suffer in the election process of the advantages of the incumbents. As mentioned earlier if fulfilling the basic requirements, anybody could pretend to the position of candidate to Parliamentary elections and Presidential ones but not everybody is prepared enough in advance.

According to the Parliamentary Elections Act (Art. 24(2)), the President issue a writ addressed to the Returning Officer with the date of the Nomination Day that should occur not less than 5 days nor more than 1 month after release; and the

¹ Own translation from the original source in French, to English.

date of Pooling Day happening no less than 10 days nor more than 56 days. Following this writ the Returning Officer needs himself to make public the information but this time, the specifications on the time frame only requires for him to issue the writ and published it “in the *Gazette* at least 4 clear days before the day fixed for the nomination” (PEA, Art. 24). The Nomination Day is basically the day on which applicants will fill necessary forms and give a political donation (under the Political donations Act) as a desire to be candidates. The whole process on Nomination Day is itself extremely restrictive and bureaucratic and requires the applicant to: go “in person” at the place of nomination, “accompanied by his proposer, seconder and at least 4 assenters”; to give the documents to the Returning Officer between 11:00am and 12:00pm (PEA, Art. 29(1);(2)).

First thing we can here notice and mention is that, the Returning Officer (RO) – who has a role appointed by the Prime Minister under section 3 of the Parliamentary Elections Act– could possibly share the date of Nomination Day only 4 days before which would give an uncomfortable position to the different parties in gathering suitable candidates. It is certainly an extreme possibility but past practices has proved that Nomination Day happened on short notice under the mandate of Lee Kuan Yew (Tan, 2015). Added to the close links of the RO with governmental positions such as ministries (The Straits Times, 2017) we could question the neutrality of the RO practices. Then the conduct of the electoral campaign is usually really short giving here again less time for the oppositions parties to rally and convince the electorate, where the officeholders would have had word before.

“The subsidies are irresistible—but come with social controls”

-The Economist, 2017

Finally, we mentioned earlier the prominent share of public housing in Singapore under the supervision of the Housing and Development Board amounting to around 80%. The government has always put efforts in providing the population with accommodations, or at least the possibility of owning their own flat, as they

believe property possession is a sign of personal wealth realisation. This service has been through the years an implicit tool for the government to encourage voters to cast PAP at the General Elections, in exchange of “continually upgraded housing units and environment ” (Chua, 1997). A strategy that was even made public as Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong declared in 1992 “the government’ s intention to link the choice of housing estates to be upgraded to the strength of votes for the PAP in the general elections” and repeated in the GE of 1996 and 2001 (Siew Eng & Kong, 1997). These kind of declarations could be seen as threats for voters who worry about the conditions of their housing facilities, because a poor PAP results in a particular constituency means HDB’s housing maintenance in this area will be of last priority.

3.3 Section review

We have tried in this section to analyse the political system of the Republic of Singapore based on the criteria of *freeness* and *fairness*, the qualities that distinguish liberal democracies from other type of regimes. Indeed, contemporary political scientists find that autocratic regimes increasingly tend to mask their true nature by emphasizing the use of elections as a mean of legitimizing leaders. In this direction, attention was paid on the mechanisms that help the government to maintain its dominance and not the actual existence of elections. We have showed that if the elections are free, the Republic of Singapore doesn’t qualify as a democracy in the liberal sense considering that the criterion of fairness was not answered positively.

Our case study could be in the end presented as having characteristics of *electoral authoritarianism* according to Schedler and Bishop & Hoeffler. To one, these regimes succeeded in proposing elections accessible to all citizens but are unsuccessful in creating the appropriate framework to make them meaningful under the conditions of freedom and equality (Schedler, 2002). With deviant version of electoral process and strict audit of freedoms, Singapore tightly

monitors the public order (the private sphere is less under the eyes of the government) and manages to restrict the threats opposing opinions.

Lastly, the City-State has been internationally criticised on another aspect of liberal democracies, which is the question of human dignity and the penal system. In 1994, the world heard about Michael P. Fay who has been sentenced to canning after found guilty for vandalism in Singapore (NY Times, 1994). If the historical penalty instituted under British influence has since been amended multiple times, it remains true that this punishment is still active under the Singaporean Penal Code and is intentioned to sexual, drug traffic and other aggravated form of offenses.

4. Free markets under an authoritarian political system

Economic prosperity is often assumed to be connected to free societies and liberal political systems. James A. Robinson, co-author with Acemoglu of the distinguished book “Why nations fail”, described the case of North and South Korea with a picture from the space to show how different economies can develop over decades. The picture shows the Korean peninsula at night. What is striking is that while the south is highly lighted the north only has one single light spot, Pyongyang. Robinson uses this example to illustrate that a country with certain characteristics is far more successful than otherwise (TED, 2014).

Their main argument follows the institutional economic approach that a country is successful as long as certain preconditions are fulfilled. The success of a society and its economy is based on the fact if political and economic institutions are inclusive or extractive. The basic argument follows the idea that if political and economic power is distributed more equally and democratically legitimized, a broader participation of people is ensured and therefore the economy benefits from a wider participation of its actors. Institutions are defined as inclusive or extractive. Extractive institutions allow an elitist group of people to exploit the main share of the resources. A vicious circle can follow allowing the elite to further cement their political power. Inclusive institutions however ensure that a broad participation and distribution of power won't allow an exclusive circle of people to extract all resources and prevents exploitation through an elite at the top (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013).

Political institutions that display free elections and participation rights of the people, determine the degree of economic rights such as property rights. These institutions determine each other and stay in a dynamic relationship to each other. In the case of Singapore therefore this theoretical approach would suggest that the country harms itself through a lack of political inclusive institutions.

Despite common theories (Acemoglu, Naidu, Restrepo, & Robinson, 2014) that democratic countries with a system of checks and balances are economically more successful certain examples seem to prove these theories wrong. Famously China as the biggest trading nation in the world also is far from being democratized by now. Milton Friedman, a Nobel Prize winning economist once stated that Lee Kuan Yew had been a “benevolent dictator” who has been able to combine a free economic system based on private markets while having a political dictatorship (Friedman, 1990). Also other voices doubt the effect of democracy on economic progress. Robert Barro for instance held the view “that more political rights do not have an effect on growth” (Barro. 1997). Also Gerring et. Al stated that “the net effect of democracy on growth performance cross-nationally over the last five decades is negative or null” (Gerring, Bond, Barndt, & Moreno, 2005).

Singapore is well known for its one-party system and the described theory above suggests that this non-inclusive system is harmful to economic development. The PAP is ruling since independence in the mid 1960's. This political structure is seen as highly vulnerable to corruption or maladministration (Verweij & Pelizzo 2009). Nevertheless, Singapore is one of the most successful and flourishing economies in the world. In the following section a short overview of the Singaporean economy will be given. Afterwards the reasons for its on-going success will be outlined.

4.1 Singapore's economy in a nutshell

Despite popular theories defending the advantages of democracy like mentioned above Singapore seems to prove them wrong and can be used as a precedence case for contradicting two critical assumptions. Firstly, that economic progress triggers a process of democratization and secondly that economic prosperity is hindered by a single-party reign through nepotism, corruption or mismanagement for instance (Verweij & Pelizzo 2009).

After gaining Independence in 1965 Singapore quickly emerged from a country with low-income to a high-income economy. The average GDP growth after independence had a value of 7.7 % on average, which made them one of the fastest growing economies worldwide (World Bank, 2018). Between 1960 and 2000 Singapore performed the biggest growth in national income worldwide. Low unemployment rates and a moderate inflation rate ensured a sustainable growth during the last decades. The constant economic development was the underlying fundament for other important progresses. Rising literacy rates, an increase of life expectancy, extermination of hunger and the reduction of poverty went along with the continuous process of economic progress (Verweij & Pelizzo 2009).

Manufacturing stimulated quickly the economy after independence and already in the early 1970's full employment was reached. High-end manufacturing, precision engineering and electronics, as well as the service sector and the financial and insurance industry are the key pillars of Singapore's present economic success. In 2017 Singapore launched an initiative called the "Asia's Infrastructure Exchange", a finance hub that is designed to ensure the regional development of infrastructure emphasizing the importance of a sustainable development that goes hand in hand with the importance of nowadays-ecological changes. The initiative seeks to combine multilateral banks, infrastructure development, local finance and engineering companies to trigger investments and progression for a sustainable and modern eco-friendly infrastructure (World Bank, 2018).

4.1.1 Reasons for Singapore's successful economy

Singapore is one of the most successful economies in the world. As outlined previously, common theories suggest that illiberal political systems can be detrimental for an economic flourishing environment. The following subsection will layout the possible reasons for this phenomenon.

Despite its relatively small geographical size of 721,5 sqm Singapore has one of the most prosperous economies in the world. Among common economic and social indicators Singapore ranks in nearly all of them in a top position. In 2017

the GDP per capita was about 52,600 \$ which made them no. 10 worldwide before economies like Netherlands, Germany or the UK for instance (World Bank, 2018).

Local entrepreneurs enjoy one of the most advanced regulatory environments and Singapore has further one of the most competitive economies in the world. The heritage foundation, an American Think-tank, issues every year in cooperation with the Wall Street Journal, the so-called “Index of Economic Freedom”. This economic indicator is designed to measure the openness of a countries market and its economy. In 2018 Singapore ranked at the second place, just after Hong Kong with the concept of economic freedom defined as “individual autonomy, concerned chiefly with the freedom of choice enjoyed by individuals in acquiring and using economic goods and services” (Heritage foundation, 2018).

Interestingly the index assumes that economic freedom goes hand in hand with a maximum of individual liberty as people know best their own desires. More interference of a technocratic government is seen as a restriction to individual freedom and hence an obstruction to an independent and autonomous life.

Self-responsibility is one of the key characteristics of economic freedom (Heritage foundation, 2018). The key factor for success in Singapore therefore is not its liberal design rather than its size. A small effective government ensures that the bureaucracy does not multiply itself. Certain measures make sure that the government works effectively and its main purpose stays to stabilize the economy. (Zhen, 1999 as cited in Ortmann & Thompson, 2014).

A small government has multiple advantages, one of them having lower costs compared to a bigger bureaucratic apparatus. It further helps to rule more effectively for the party in power as a single-staged system with only a low number of different departments and is superior and more flexible than a more swollen administration (Wang & Ran, 1999; Zeng, 1999, as cited in Ortmann & Thompson, 2014). Despite its authoritarian political system, Singapore was able

to create a climate of inclusive economic institutions to ensure broad participation of the people for instance as entrepreneurs.

Another crucial aspect of the success of the Singaporean economy is its efficient corruption-free government. A general assumption is that a single-party-ruled country, with an illiberal political framework is vulnerable to corruption, nepotism and is a threat to the countries economy (Verweij & Pelizzo 2009). Regarding corruption however, Singapore ranked on the sixth place in 2017 as one of the most trustworthy countries in the world with a constant high value in the past years in the “Corruption Perception Index” (Transparency international, 2017). This index is based on the opinions of businessmen and experts regarding perceived corruption in public sector.

Contrary to Western approaches on how to fight and avoid corruption, Singapore has a value-based political system, the Singaporean leadership is based on Confucian values and the integrity of the government which represents a sound moral leadership. Whereas in Western democracies a system of checks and balances are installed to guarantee clean and corrupt free administrations (Ortmann & Thompson, 2014). Unquestionably, this design of the rule of law requires that also high representatives of the state are liable and that independent investigations are possible. (Peng, 2006 as cited in Ortmann & Thompson, 2014).

Additionally, meritocracy is a critical feature to ensure of the efficiency of the government. The responsible and ruling top politicians are selected on the base of rigorous requirements they are ought to fulfil. These mechanisms should guarantee that only politicians capable of the leadership are in power. Key positions are strictly based on abilities and qualifications of potential candidates. For this effect, salaries are usually relatively high in the Singaporean public sector in order to prevent corruption and attract talents from the private sector (Ortmann & Thompson, 2014). The recruitment process of experts has two critical advantages: On one hand it prevents corruption and on the other hand, it does strengthen the ties between the civil society and the ruling elite. A selection

process based on meritocracy increases the credibility of an administration because they are selected to serve the public and not for sole financial benefits (Zheng, 2010 as cited in Ortmann & Thompson, 2014).

Finally the economic policies that were implemented after independence laid the foundation for the development. What W.G. Huff called the “Singapore Model” contained multiple instruments of economic policy to build a stable development. Huff argues that a strong governmental involvement can be beneficial for certain sectors of the economy. The domestic market was manipulated according to international changes in the world markets. To suspend the price mechanism on which a free market is based on, is only possible when international adjustments and changes are taken into consideration by the decisive force, which was entirely the People’s Action Party after independence (Huff, 1995).

Furthermore, the author argues that a state-controlled wage policy ensured that Singapore didn’t lose its competitiveness in international markets. Wage control was the main driver for internationally operating companies to manufacture in Singapore. This mechanism sharply reduced unemployment and triggered foreign direct investments.

Increasing productivity of labour allowed the government to constrain high domestic savings, which were in turn invested in education and public infrastructure. The advantage of state-controlled savings and investments in infrastructure on the other hand is that inflation was kept low, as not printing money was the source of investments. According to Huff this prevented the effect of “crowding out” private investments, as public investments were complementary to the former (Huff, 1995).

Even though illiberal systems are considered to be harmful for free markets and economic prosperity, Singapore is showing an on-going economic success. Acemolgu et Al. consider restrictive and illiberal political systems vulnerable to extractive institutions that exploit a main share of the resources. Democratic structures determine the limit of these extractions (Acemoglu et Al., 2014).

However, the case of Singapore suggests that also illiberal political authorities can create structures that ensure a free and liberal inclusive market system. The next subsection will shortly outline possible future challenges for the Singaporean economy under an authoritarian system.

4.1.2 Future economic challenges

Despite Singapore's economic success in the past decades there exist several problems stemming from the authoritarian political system that could also harm its economic progress in the future. Since the PAP is in power, opposition groups were suppressed and other approaches than the ones developed by the PAP were never taken into consideration. Policies that would have maybe more counterbalanced by opposite views and expert opinions might have produced better outcomes than the ones only implemented by the PAP. Past considerations are difficult to value, as they never happened however this is an on-going problem that is also valid for future changes and decisions (Verweij & Pelizzo 2009).

Another future challenge is the structure of the economy. Supported by the PAP a large number of multinational enterprises emerged in Singapore. The emphasis on conglomerates rather than on a diversified number of also small and medium sized companies made the Singaporeans economy vulnerable as the market lacks of diversity. The economy is highly dependent on foreign experts who usually held high positions in these companies. On the other hand, a large number of people responsible for low-paid positions flowed within Singapore, as with Singaporeans who see their wealth growing, are themselves no longer willing to take these jobs (construction and household for instance). This development led to an increase of income inequality among the people living in Singapore.

5. Concluding section

5.1 The Singaporean model: possible evidence?

Through the findings of this research we have been able to see where Singapore fails to be considered as a liberal-democracy, but also where does it disprove the various theories of democratization.

The first hypothesis postulates that the government of Singapore has an institutionalised framework and a stable government. As we have seen in the section 4, the Republic of Singapore does have a Constitution that guarantees human rights such as civic rights or religious freedom. This is enhanced by a high belief against corruption and meritocracy. The electoral process described in our findings proved of a limited government interference. However, where electoral support for the opposition could produce undesirable consequences (defamation, bankruptcy), it hasn't been proven formerly that these practices are the only cause of the presence of the PAP (US Department of State, 2008).

The country has known an impressive stability of the regime with only one party in power since its independence. If this fact doesn't satisfy to the "turnover test" at first sight, it could also be a sign of the satisfaction of the population with the government's policies. As Lee Kuan Yew's successor Goh Chok Tong stated "a stable system is one where there is a mainstream political party representing a broad range of the population" (as cited in Huntington, 1991), the PAP party has always managed to offer some sort of solution to societal problems.

This strategy is due to the pragmatism of the party, a party that does not claim to be following some classical political fractions but systematically offering the appropriate policies, suitable to the country. The "efficient and effective government" that "nurtures and facilitates the optimal use of human and natural resources" is seen as the legitimate leader for this country (Bellows, 2009). The PAP is very adaptive and flexible to whatever circumstances it encounters, and make possible a quick answer when it "identifies challenges and opportunities".

The importance of meritocracy enhances the qualities necessary to pretend to high positions and allow for Singapore's success to be "a result of optimal policy decisions, by a political elite" (Bellows, 2009). This search for the best can be seen for example with the private and public qualifications imperative for presidential candidates cited previously.

The second hypothesis of this research intended to prove that despite not having a liberal-democratic layout in the political sphere, the country enjoy a stable and successful economy. Our last section has shown numerically how successful and developed Singapore was, with open market and a high value in economic freedom. This point contradicts the main theories linking high development and democracy, as well as theories supposing that liberal-democratic countries will tend to only trade among each other. John M. Owen, explained that the way democratic countries perceived other countries' political regime would influence the nature of their relationship. Settled democracies will have a more peaceful behaviour towards democracies and be more inclined to exchange and cooperate but might not consider nations that are not (Owen, 1994). If this point can be understood in terms of international relations for example, it is curious that Western countries benefit from trade with Singapore, while pointing a finger at China, its cultural mother.

Finally, the third hypothesis intended at assessing the quality of Singapore's model compared to a liberal-democratic one. We can posit that the main explanation why the actual model of governance is functioning depends on the socio-cultural background of the country. Pierre Rosanvallon pointed out that based on the infinite debate about the concept of liberal democracy, no countries has really achieved the ideal and some are "imperfect democracies", "Potemkin democracies", "semi-democracies", basically not a pure liberal democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008). Considering that Singapore managed to provide "welfare, prosperity, equity, justice, domestic order, or external security" (Huntington, 1991) we could maybe give her the benefit of putting it also in these "flawed democracy". The remaining aspect still not answered would be the Freedom of

Speech and Freedom of Assembly, which both exist *de jure* but again in a restrictive way.

This restrictive character, we argue, is not necessarily a sign of malfunctioning of the political sphere rather a trade-off between economic achievement and civic/political freedom.

5.2 Future prospects and further thoughts

“Unfortunately for the ruling group, hegemony/consensus invariably tends to weaken once the historical conditions that enabled its emergence and consolidation begin to change as a result of both the government’s own policies and external social forces.” (Chua, 2002)

Singapore’s historical policies developments were made according to its founder’s goal -the success of the Nation- that he believed would lead to the success of the society. Thus, one way Singapore could transit to a liberal democratic system would be if the main pillars of the government were being destroyed. If for example the economy encounters a recessive period or a crisis which then would question the entire bureaucratic and strict policies of the government and bury its legitimacy “dependent on successful performance” (Huntington, 1991). Strict and hard-working, Lee Kuan Yew is one of the reason of Singapore’s today success and it will be thus interesting in the future to see how does the country transit from this firm-handed Prime Minister to leaders of a new generation.

Also, the nation’s population is becoming bigger and bigger, being in part due to high immigration, it could be difficult for the government to keep the harmony and common interests it has managed to mould for fifty years. The choice of the Singaporean government to always call attention on the multiracial pillar seems to be fragile and can actually go against integration of the minorities by creating wider differences, but this is might be a topic relevant for positive discrimination researches.

In addition to ethnical issues, in his recent book, Francis Fukuyama returns on the article that made him famous and shed a light on one threat to the establishment of democracy, “the master concept, demand for recognition” (Fukuyama, 2018). Recent history has seen a multiplicity of demands for recognition based on small-group unit and associated with matters of race, religion, social group or gender (see #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, rise of White nationalism for e.g). Fukuyama explains that while our democratic era offered us individualism, it has on the other hand pushed the need to be acknowledged as part of a community, “to be seen as both equal and superior to others” (Alim, 2018) and has created tensions against various groups broadening up the polarisation of the society. Where Liberty and Equality were the main reasons for voting for a liberal-democratic candidate, he forecast that individuals could now vote according to their tribe’s values, the society will be “fragmented” and “democracy ceases to function” (Alim, 2018).

Another turning point would be the deepening of the society into external values. The Singaporean population enjoys on average of a high educated and wealthy lifestyle. The future leading generation, the now youth, is more and more traveling, getting accustomed to western style of life and might probably ask for more de facto power in the future. The findings also suggest that young, middle-class, highly educated Chinese have replaced working-class Malays as the greatest challenge to continued PAP dominance (Fetzer, 2008), a population group thus more inclined to political and societal changes. Towards the end of his life, even the modern Singapore creator Lee Kuan Yew talked about possible democratic principles. Most likely, western democracy could show a bit of its nose, as the conditions to which Singapore managed to be that way change. This authoritarian and successful regime was created thanks to exceptional conditions, a one-time moment.

With such a young country, the Republic of Singapore is most probably still in the process to create and consolidate both its national identity and its political model. Additional research could be done on the precise role of the PAP in this creation-process and uncover the route of its hegemonic rule.

This research could be criticised for its narrow validity as Singapore alone was used as an example. If the choice of this particular land as already been justified in introduction, we could add that Singapore offered a perfect example of curiosity has it seem to be combining Western and Asian traits. Because of the limitation of pages and the will of being as detailed as possible in our example, we decided to remain focus on the Lion-State. Thus another way this research could continue is to extend its geographical research on similar cases such as Hong-Kong, Taiwan or Japan.

It was very interesting to do this research and work on such a peculiar hybrid system. All countries have their own timeline depending on the environment and how they evolve. Singapore, with its capitalized and developing society can more than likely implement a Western style of Democracy but it will and shall be done through incremental changes because the actual combination in the political, economical and social areas produce a situation that is not the most favourable to expand and have the full liberal-democratic characteristics. Besides, when Western thinkers claim that we need Liberal-Democracy because we need Freedom, to which the Asian World has answered with opinionated papers, isn't freedom to choose not to follow a certain path? The most liberal answer would be that a harmonious world allows countries to dispose of the regime question themselves (as long as it doesn't create international armed conflict) and to not infringe their sovereignty.

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List of Appendices

Appendix 1: The chain of Democratic choice

Appendices

Appendix 1: The chain of democratic choice,

Table 1 in Schedler, A. (2002). The Menu of Manipulation. *Journal Of Democracy*, 13(2), 36-50. doi: 10.1353/jod.2002.0031

	DIMENSIONS OF CHOICE	NORMATIVE PREMISES OF DEMOCRATIC CHOICE	STRATEGIES OF NORM VIOLATION
1	The object of choice	<i>Empowerment</i> : Democratic elections involve the delegation of decision-making authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reserved positions</i>: limiting the scope of elective offices • <i>Reserved domains</i>: limiting the jurisdiction of elective offices
2	The range of choice	<i>Freedom of supply</i> : Citizens must be free to form, join, and support conflicting parties, candidates, and policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Exclusion of opposition forces</i>: restricting access to the electoral arena • <i>Fragmentation of opposition forces</i>: disorganizing electoral dissidence
3	The formation of preferences	<i>Freedom of demand</i> : Citizens must be able to learn about available alternatives through access to alternative sources of information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Repression</i>: restricting political and civil liberties • <i>Unfairness</i>: restricting access to media and money
4	The agents of choice	<i>Inclusion</i> : Democracy assigns equal rights of participation to all full members of the political community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Formal disenfranchisement</i>: legal suffrage restrictions • <i>Informal disenfranchisement</i>: practical suffrage restrictions
5	The expression of preferences	<i>Insulation</i> : Citizens must be free to express their electoral preferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Coercion</i>: voter intimidation • <i>Corruption</i>: vote buying
6	The aggregation of preferences	<i>Integrity</i> : One person, one vote. The democratic ideal of equality demands weighting votes equally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Electoral fraud</i>: “redistributive” election management • <i>Institutional bias</i>: “redistributive” electoral rules
7	The consequences of choice	<i>Irreversibility</i> : Elections without consequences do not qualify as democratic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tutelage</i>: preventing elected officers from exercising their constitutional powers • <i>Reversal</i>: preventing victors from taking office, or elected officers from concluding their constitutional terms